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When a man dies, his most personal belongings, his bow and arrows and his lance and shirt and baskets, are destroyed. Theoretically everything else is, too, but actually the precious articles acquired from the Brazilians are kept—sometimes with apologies to the ghost. When Kakthí died during the epidemic of 1933 her son-in-law Yakwá could not endure to throw into her grave the beautiful steel knife she had inherited from her husband. So he kept it, and as she lay in her grave he spoke these words to her: "*Nyǫ́*, give me your knife—I am going to make it my own. Protect me from your husband—tell your husband that I took your knife. I have no knife; so I took it. Do not be angry with me. Do not leave me. If I fall ill I will ask you to protect me. I have given you all of your property and taken only the knife."

Every death can be explained in terms of a ghost that has followed the owner of some bit of property that belonged to it while it dwelt in a living body and rapt him away to bear it company. Blankets and, in recent times, clothing are always thrown away, for they have been in close contact with the deceased. Dogs, in spite of their great value, are frequently killed, for "they always used to go around with him" and have become too closely associated with the dead person to make it wholesome for the living to keep them about. Dogs that habitually hunt with large groups of human beings have very diffuse loyalties and will obey almost anyone, so that the death of their owner still does not render them useless. The iron pots are generally abandoned, for to the Kaingáng pots are much more than simple cooking utensils—they are symbols of the living organism,[10] and when death comes much of its affect crystallizes around them. The *thâpẹ́ya*, the widowed, must eat nothing from a pot until his isolation, his *waikómáng*, is terminated, nor could anyone who had killed a human being eat food cooked in a pot.[11] Thus, at death there is a general revulsion of feeling against those things that have been in close contact with the living, but the most valuable possessions are frequently kept in defiance of the *kuplêng*.[12] Knives, scissors, axes, and nowadays guns are the things most frequently kept, and the "inheritance" of these objects is most frequently within the immediate family, with the husband or the wife taking the greater part.[13] When an object has been "taken," however, its fate is by no means settled. Although Yakwá took Kakthí's knife, a few days later he had handed it over to Vomblé, his mother's brother's son.

But probably the most striking aspect of Kaingáng inheritance is the way

[10] See p. 184. The ancient clay pots were broken.

[11] For the further discussion of ideas and practices associated with death see Appendix III.

[12] Ghost-soul.

[13] This has been inferred from a large number of specific instances collected by going through a hundred cases of inheritance.

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768 in which the emphasis on obligations to relatives by marriage is followed
881 through. Formerly if the dead man left any little children who had not yet had their lips pierced or their thighs pricked, a close relative, usually a brother, gathered the dead man's possessions together, prepared beer for the child's "blackening," and distributed the goods to the in-laws of the dead man. Perhaps the surviving relative also had children to blacken, and so on such an occasion his own property would also be distributed to his own in-laws.

556 Once property had been stolen from the Brazilians it flowed by gradual stages from the hands of the warrior into those of his relatives, and on his death it was either distributed to his in-laws or inherited by his wife and children. Societies like those of the Plains Indians of North America had made the distribution of property a device for the attainment of prestige, but when a Kaingáng gave away his booty he was doing simply what was expected of him as a relative. In many societies power tends to concentrate where property accumulates, but although the Kaingáng respect power they cannot tolerate any kind of intensification of it; for such intensification is felt by them to be disruptive. Through their insistence on the primary importance of the other person and their failure to reward achievement, the Kaingáng have suppressed processes that encourage the concentration of power in the hands of outstanding individuals.

The Meaning of the Feuds

628 One of the sources of aggression was the accumulation of resentments growing out of adultery and rejections by "deserting" relatives. Feuds and raids on the Brazilians provided substitute outlets for these resentments, and at the same time, by projecting the aggressions outside, operated to protect each extended family from internal disruption. A factor powerful in the perpetuation of the feuds is the Kaingáng feeling that once a force has been started it can never be stayed. Paralleling this on the human side is the belief that once a person has committed murder he will keep on.[14] With such a view of the natural world all that is necessary is that murder be committed once in order that there shall be perpetual distrust of the murderer. Given this attitude, the distinction in emotional ties within and between the extended families, and the peculiar social outlook of the Kaingáng, it is easy to see why things should have taken the turn they did: since murderousness is the attribute not only of individuals but also of groups, the groups suspect—and slay—one another forever.

[14] A parallel to this is not hard to find in our own society, for we believe that "a leopard cannot change its spots," and "once a criminal always a criminal." One of the fundamental bases of the theory of capital punishment is that a murderer must be got out of the way because he is likely to commit another murder under similar circumstances.